MY CHOSEN

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CHAPTER 1

CHOSEN OUT OF THE WORLD

'*I have chosen you*!' John 15. 16.

These words have a special and wonderful meaning for God's children, and the daily prayer of each one of us should be: 'O Lord, I want these words to become real in my life, not only for today, but also for every day.'

If indeed we have been chosen of God, then, whatever our difficulty or problem, God will surely provide a solution. All of us have problems, whether we are saved or unsaved, young or old in the faith, growing spiritually or not, spiritually mature or not, all of us will continue to have some problem or other until our last day on earth. We have no promise that if we trust in the Lord we shall be freed from all our problems and difficulties. Rather we may have increasing difficulties and greater problems. However, I do believe that these words have God's answer for each one of us. '*I have chosen you.*' What comfort and assurance are ours when we realize that we have been chosen by our Lord. Even though He knows more about us than do our neighbours, knows all our inward corruption, rottenness, failures and shortcomings, how we have failed and grieved Him, yet He is saying these words to us who have been bought, purchased and cleansed by His blood.

'I have chosen you *out of the world.*' John 15. 19.

These words are addressed to those who have been definitely chosen by the Lord. In the epistle to the

Ephesians Paul uses seven names to describe God's people. They are called the Church, His Body, the New Man, God's family or the household of God, God's workmanship, an holy temple, and the bride of Christ. Why does he call God's people by the name 'church'! Eph. 1. 22. The word 'church' in the Greek is *ecclesia*, which has a special meaning. When the Lord said those words in John 15. 16, 19: 'I have chosen you out of the world', the real thought is: 'I have gathered you out of the world.' The word used is a very strong one. It does not mean simply: 'I have chosen you as I would choose a friend.' The word the Lord uses here means: 'I have drawn or pulled you out by much power.' In other words our Lord has had to exercise His mighty strength in order to pull us out of the world. That is the meaning of the word *ecclesia*.

Suppose yourself to be walking in a marshy place which outwardly may look like a grassy plot, but underneath is miry clay. When you begin to walk upon it, with every step you will sink deeper and deeper into the clay, and the more you try to get out the deeper you will go. Imagine a very large elephant sinking into such soil, and struggling hard to get out! The more it struggled, the deeper it would go, and should other elephants come and try to pull it out, they would also be sucked down in the quagmire. Even if all the men from the neighbourhood, feeling sorry for the poor elephant, were to come and try to pull it out, they would also sink in the same way. Such is the nature of 'miry clay', the very word that is used by the psalmist in Psalm 40. 2, and thus Scripture describes the condition of a sinner, who, according to God's Word, is walking and sinking in miry clay.

There is a time in the life of every man when he feels sorry for his sinful life,—it may be in youth, in middle age, or in old age. He decides: 'From tomorrow I will try very hard to change. I have determined to lead a better life.' But,

alas! he only becomes worse, and the more he tries, the worse he becomes, because human nature is such. Even if he goes to others and asks them to help him to become better he will find that they also will fail, and together they will sink deeper and deeper into the miry clay, out of which no human effort will succeed in pulling them.

The Lord Jesus Christ alone has the power to pull men out of the miry clay of sin, and He came to this earth in order to do so. In that sense He uses the word 'church' to describe those who are drawn out, pulled out, or chosen. Before there can be the evidence of His choice in our lives, there must be the exercise of His drawing power. Has the Lord chosen *you*? Have you got that inward assurance which enables you to say: 'The Lord Jesus has chosen *me*'? Can you say that evidence is in your life?

Before you can understand what it is to be chosen by Him you must know the meaning of the word 'world'. Whatever you see now upon this earth will soon pass away. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.' Matt. 24. 35. Things which cannot be shaken shall remain. That which will pass away is called the 'world' in the Bible. Even the sun, moon, and stars may pass away, but there are things which will not pass away. Our Lord has chosen us in order to bring us into 'a kingdom which cannot be shaken.' Heb. 12. 28. If you have been chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ, how much do you possess of that which will not pass away, and how much of that which will pass away? We do not want to know how much money you have in the bank, or how much property you have, and so on, or even how much of the Bible you know. Bible knowledge, however good it may be, will soon be forgotten. Our good deeds will not last for ever, nor can we remain good for ever, for our nature changes as life goes on, and all of us are full of weaknesses, wasting our time and energies on the things which will pass away.

When we realize that the Lord has chosen us, we realize also how transient is the world in which we live, and that nothing in it can give true happiness. The things of the world will appear to us as miry clay in which we can only sink deeper and deeper. The Lord Jesus Christ says: 'I have chosen you out of the world.' He has come to rescue us from the attraction of earthly things, to pull us out of those things which would drag us down, and to give us everlasting riches. Do not refuse Him, nor cling to the things that will pass away.

The Lord says further: 'I have chosen you out of the world, *that I may make you my friends*.' John 15. 15.

These words are not meant only for the apostles to whom He was speaking. They are meant also for you and me. 'I have chosen *you*, to make *you* my friend,' He says. Only those who have divine life can understand these words, for how can a sinner living in sin and darkness be God's friend? 'All things which I have heard from the Father I have made known to you,' He said, and we can prove to the whole world that we are the friends of the Lord Jesus Christ because day by day those truths and mysteries which have been hidden even from the heavenly angels are being revealed to us.

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us those things as we begin to walk with God and learn the secret of talking with Him, and receiving daily something fresh from Him. Such things cannot be taught to us by any school-teacher, professor, or other man. In Matt. 11. 25–27, and 16. 17, we read of a man who had been with the Lord Jesus Christ for three years, who had seen many miracles done by Him and had also heard Him preaching, and who could therefore honestly say to the Lord Jesus Christ: 'I know everything about you, because I have been with you, talked with you, ate with you, slept with you.' But the Lord Jesus Christ

told him: 'Simon, you do not know me by flesh and blood, but my heavenly Father has revealed this to you.'

When the very life of God comes into you, you will be able to say: 'Now I know the Lord, because His very life is flowing into me, constantly and abundantly, and that life brings to me the revelation of His will and purpose. Now He may punish me and chastise me, yet I know He has chosen me. Nor has He chosen me for only a few days, as the world chooses its favoured ones.' For example, a young man may marry a girl because he thinks that he loves her so much that he cannot live without her, yet after a few months he regrets his marriage. Man changes his mind from year to year, but this is not God's way. When God chooses, He chooses for eternity, and even though we may fail and grieve Him, yet His choice will never change.

God has chosen us. He has chosen us for a purpose, and He knows how to make us fit for that purpose. Isa. 49. 3. God had to rebuke Jacob many times, yet He had chosen him, and His choice never changed. It took many years and much patience for God to shape Jacob as a chosen vessel. God could have said: 'Now Jacob, you are no good. I have made a mistake, and there is no hope for you. You are so weak and hopeless.' But God never said anything like that. He went on rebuking Jacob and chastising him, till he became Israel. God had chosen him before he was born, and His choice would never change. Whoever you may be, and though you may bear a hopeless testimony before your neighbours; yes, even though your father and mother may have cause to say before your friends that there is no hope for you, and that they think you are worthless and entirely useless, yet God will never cast you off. If you are a true believer He still says to you: 'My child, I have chosen you; even though you are grieving me and failing me, yet I have chosen you.'

God told Jacob in Gen. 28. 15: 'I will never leave thee.' You may leave Him. You may say: 'I have no time for God. I want to earn more money. I want to provide for my wife and children. I want to get a name in the world. I have a business to run, and a very important business too, then how can I find the time to read my Bible and pray?' It is through such things that many have become cold towards God. Yet the Lord is still saying to you: 'You may leave me, but I will never leave you. I have chosen you for eternity.' Oh, what love! what grace! what a salvation!

CHAPTER II

CHOSEN FOR A PURPOSE

'*Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.*' Psa. 106. 4, 5.

I believe the Lord has something to say to us from these words. Read them for yourself on your knees. Read them with faith. Read them again and again. Whatever your need may be, read these words again and again, and you will find a change coming into your heart. God uses many situations and circumstances to awaken in us spiritual desire. Very few of us have naturally a real longing and hunger for God. Many of us think of Him only when we want something, or when we are in trouble, in distress, in sickness or in poverty. Very few of us go to God for His own sake. We go to Him only because we want something earthly or perishing, and alas! with many of us, the desires which we have in our hearts are for perishing things which have no real value.

In the beginning, perhaps, we do not know what we are doing, because we have been so carried away by our own childish ideas. Take a simple illustration. Everyone knows what mushrooms are. They are found mostly in sandy places and generally grow in one night after rain. In fact there is a proverb which speaks of 'growing like mushrooms'. As children we used to go out to gather mushrooms after rain, and we often walked four to five miles searching for them. One morning we found many of the white variety. I was so happy that I quietly filled my basket and took it home

to my mother and said: 'I have found many mushrooms! What a tasty meal we shall have when you have cooked them with onions!' My mother looked in the basket. She took out one piece, looked at it, and threw it away, then a second, and a third! Then she said: 'My son, you have been deceived. These are not mushrooms. They look like mushrooms, but are not. They are of no use.'

We find that those who do not know how to discern the things of God, are, in the same way, being carried away by outward appearances, and alas! do not know it. They are wasting their time, money and energy upon worldly things.

What about you? Have you really a true appreciation of the things of God? Can you truthfully say that your hunger and thirst is far greater for the things of God than for perishing things? Alas! in every heart is some desire, some longing and yielding which drags the heart away from God. We need to pray continually that our loving God may give us that spiritual desire which the Psalmist breathes in these words: '*Remember me, O Lord.*' It does not require a very long prayer to express our desire to know God. It requires only simple faith.

Once a small child was learning English in school. He was learning the letters: A B C. Then one day he began to pray. He said: 'Lord, A B C D.' After a moment's silence he prayed again: 'E F G H I J K L M N O P Q . . .' 'My child, what *are* you doing?' interrupted his mother. 'I am praying,' said the child. 'What are you praying?' 'Mother, I don't know how to spell, but God can spell. You say *b a t* is *bat*, *c a t* is *cat*, *f a t* is *fat*. I do not know how to spell even simple words, so I am giving the letters to God and He can do the spelling.' That child had the right attitude. He was praying with faith. Whether or not you know how to use proper words in prayer does not matter. The question is, do you pray in faith? Can you truthfully say: 'Yes, Lord,

I believe you will remember me. Remember me, O Lord, remember me!' These are only simple words, but let them come from the heart. Do not look at yourself, or your condition, or even at your sins and failures. Look away to Him, your loving and living Saviour who loves you more than anybody else, whether father, mother, wife, brother, sister, child or friend.

The psalmist says in Psa. 27. 10: 'When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.' It is quite possible for the day to come in your life, when your father, mother, brother, sister or loved ones may turn against you. Many fathers and mothers have turned against their wayward children, but God says that though your parents may leave you, He will never do so. Do not look at yourself. It does not matter who you are, or how shameful and great your sins may be, or how much you have failed the Lord after new birth; are you willing to say these words before God: 'Lord, remember me, even me. To whom shall I go? All my hope is only in Thee. O Lord, remember me.' You will find that simple prayer will bring you nearer to God and God to you.

Look again at the same verse from Psa. 106. 4. The psalmist began: 'O Lord, remember me.' Then he adds: 'Remember me with the favour which thou didst shew to thy people.'

In the world men are divided into many groups. Some are carried away by nationality. They say: 'I am an Indian; or Chinese; or Japanese,' and so on. Some are carried away by wealth; some by position; and some by things like language, education, or profession. In the Bible, however, we find only two groups: God's people and the devil's people. In John 8. 40, 41 and 44, the people were saying: 'We belong to God; we have Abraham as our father,' but the Lord Jesus reminded them: 'No, you are not God's people; ye are of your father the devil.' These are very

strong words, and such words may offend, but we must remember that they are not the words of man. They were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ.

To which group do you belong? I do not want to know your nationality or profession or wealth or Bible knowledge or name or fame. Are you one of God's people, or do you belong to the second group? It is only by receiving the divine life of God that you can become one of the family of God. You cannot make yourself an Englishman or an American merely by putting on a nice suit or shirt or tie!

In the early days Anglo-Indians were given preference with regard to railway jobs, and because of that, many Indians when they applied for jobs, borrowed shoes, hat and tie, and introduced themselves as Mr. Smith, Mr. Henry, or Mr. Matthew. Now the order has changed. Mr Smith takes the name of Guruswamy! However, the point is that merely by changing your name you cannot become a different person.

Are you one of God's people? Be honest with yourself. Let your first prayer be: 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people.' What a privilege, what an honour to be one of God's people! The Lord Jesus Christ came into this world that the sons of the devil might become the sons of God.

Wherever you go in India there are many beggars. The beggar may call you 'father', but will you say: 'Yes, my son'? He may call you 'father' every time you go down the road, but does that make him your son? He only is a son who has received life from the father. Now the question is, can God indeed call us His people? How I thank God that He can call *me*, 'My son!'; but it is only by receiving the life of God, eternal spiritual life, new and divine life, that you can become a child of God. Then, even without your asking, you will also have His divine favour.

The psalmist says next: '*O visit me with thy salvation.*' His real thought is 'Lord, shew me *fully* thy salvation.' Now suppose you want to become a doctor, and you go to medical college and walk over the whole college building, and look at the bones of human beings, and the many dead bodies for dissection; suppose also that you visit various hospitals and learn by heart the names of medicines such as penicillin and streptomycin; after one week of such wanderings could you go home and say: 'Mother, I am a doctor now'? Mother would say: 'How soon!' You might say: 'Mother, I have seen all the bones; I have seen dead bodies too; I know what are penicillin and streptomycin; I have also bought a stethoscope; I am a doctor now'; but you cannot become a doctor that way; you have to spend many years studying in order to learn all about diseases and medicines and their effect on the human body.

There are many so-called Christians who think that by learning some Bible verses, they will receive salvation. But this salvation is great and eternal. It cannot be understood within a few days or even years. It will take eternity itself to know Christ fully. The psalmist says: 'O visit me with thy salvation.' He is not saying: 'Lord, teach me more about the Bible.' He is saying with hunger: 'Lord, teach me more fully about thy salvation.'

There was once a Mohammedan king called Shahjahan, who was put in prison by his son. The latter said: 'My father won't die easily and I want to be on the throne,' so he imprisoned his father for many years in the Agra Fort, and gave him only peas to eat every day. Fortunately the father had a very good cook, who could prepare seventy-five different dishes with peas alone. The thought here is that it may take many years to gain skill in the use of even ordinary things. How then can you hope to know this great salvation in a short time? It is a far greater salvation than you can imagine.

You must seek to understand the full purpose and thought of God in everything He does. Why is He seeking you? Why should He take so much time and trouble in searching for you and calling you? Take as an illustration the collecting of certain important medicinal herbs that grow on mountains, different ones having different values for the cure of diseases or wounds. Those who know the value of these herbs and leaves search for them for months and years and wander many miles in that search. Others will pass by those same herbs without even stopping to look at them. It is the same spiritually. God knows your value better than even your father or mother does. In the eyes of God, the value of one soul is far greater than all the wealth of the world. God is after you, because He knows what He can make of you. He wants to make you His partner and co-worker for eternity. The psalmist's desire for God's salvation is a prayer: 'O God, make me thy chosen vessel', and in verse 5 he gives the reason: '*that I may see the good of thy chosen*'.

I went once to a house and saw there on the mantel-piece many beautifully painted articles. I asked the master of the house: 'What are these things?' He answered that they were only ordinary egg-shells. He had made a tiny hole and removed the contents, and had been collecting shells in this way for many years. Being a good artist, he had painted a beautiful design on each egg-shell. They were only egg-shells, useless and fit to be thrown away, but when they came into the hand of the artist, they became something useful and beautiful. If you were to get an egg, what would you do with it? You would break the shell, of course, eat the contents, and then throw the shell away. That shell is of no use to *you*, but an artist can make something beautiful out of it.

God also has a purpose in choosing and calling you, even though you have been ruined and marred by sin, and men

can see the marks of sin upon your face. In God's Word we are compared to filthy rags, dry grass, faded flowers, and withered leaves. That is what we are in God's sight, yet He has chosen us. He wants you and me, to make of us chosen heavenly vessels for His honour and glory. Only God can do such a thing. Man cannot do it. Are you willing to be one of God's chosen vessels? *He* is willing even if you are utterly worthless. God can make you something useful to Himself for Eternity, provided you come and surrender yourself wholly and solely to Him.

'*O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen,*' Psa. 105. 6.

Here Jacob is called a chosen vessel, and God chose him knowing all about him. Now how do *we* choose? Suppose, for example, we want to buy potatoes or tomatoes, we go to the market and choose the best shop. We ask for so many kilos of potatoes and tomatoes and onions and so on, and because we are buying for ourselves we choose carefully. We say this is good; that is no good; this is too big and that is too small; this is too old and that is too crushed. That is how *we* choose. But God says it does not matter if you are ugly and defiled and ruined by sin. Man may say you are useless, but when you go to God He will ask only: 'Are you willing to be my vessel? Are you willing to surrender yourself to me?' That is all. He knows how to wash you, cleanse you and transform you, if you leave yourself in His hands.

When you give your clothes to the dhoby, do you say: 'Mr. Dhoby, you must wash like this. You must soak the clothes in water, then apply the soap and rub the clothes, then put them again to soak.'? The dhoby would surely say: 'Leave that to me. That is none of *your* business, it is *my* business. I know how to wash the clothes. That is my job. Please do not give me instructions.' The dhoby knows

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how to wash your clothes, and Christ knows how to cleanse any filthy sinner and transform him into something glorious. For your part you must only be prepared and willing to become His chosen vessel.

God chose Jacob and transformed him into a prince with God even though it took him twenty years to do so. What would you think were you to take your clothes to the laundry, and get them back only after twenty years? Alas! we are much more dirty than our clothes, and our Lord goes on cleansing us till we become like Him. God will not be satisfied till we are 'conformed to the image of His Son'.

Do *you* want to be His chosen vessel? Are you willing to be washed and purified till He is satisfied?

CHAPTER III

A CHOSEN VESSEL

I want you to note those words in Acts 6. 5, '*and they chose Stephen*'. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the man called Stephen was chosen by the whole multitude. They did not elect him by voting, but chose him with one accord or unanimously. The word 'chosen' in the Greek includes the meaning that the choice is 'without opposition of any kind, unitedly'. There was no strife, no discouragement, no quarrel. All knew that he had been chosen. The word 'Stephen' means 'crown', and how triumphant was that man's life, even though he lived for so short a time. This one man of God accomplished much more in his brief life than we who have been many years in the Lord, and he was indeed worthy to receive a crown, a crown of glory.

We are not told much about Stephen. We do not know anything about his parents or family or qualifications. Suddenly he appears on the scene like a bright shining star, and becomes the very first martyr, calling upon the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ in the moment of death.

The meaning of divine choice is revealed to us by the life and ministry of Stephen. Do we, like him, also want to be chosen—or called of God with a heavenly calling ? Is there a longing in your soul as had the psalmist in Psa. 106. 1. where he begins the psalm with the words: 'Praise ye the Lord' ? Praise is a heavenly thing. We praise God for the blessings of eternity, for heavenly, eternal and glorious things, and not merely for earthly things. If we want to

live a triumphant life, we must first of all understand what it means to be one of God's people. 'Remember me, O God, with the favour that thou barest unto thy people, and visit me with thy salvation.'

Have you that spiritual conviction that you are one of a heavenly people, a peculiar people, God's chosen people, a people that have been pulled out by God's mighty hand, who have become a heavenly peculiar treasure. Mark that word 'peculiar treasure'. Man's standard of choice is based on rank or position or wealth or fame. But God has a different standard. Even though we are as filthy rags, ruined by sin and absolutely worthless and useless, yet He says: 'O my son, my daughter, I want you to be my *peculiar treasure*.' He knows what He can make of you and me for eternity, if only we place ourselves in His hands. So do not resist God's hand, when it is His desire to choose you. In Psa. 106. 4, 5, the psalmist prays: '*That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation and glory with thine inheritance.*' All these things are exemplified in the life of Stephen, who, in becoming God's chosen vessel brought to many heavenly joy, and, as a believer, gloried with all the saints in the great heavenly inheritance.

I remember the early days of my Christian life in the year 1936, when, after my conversion, my father met me at the station and said to me: 'We have absolutely no objection to your becoming a Christian, but I request that when you come to your home town you do not say that you are a Christian. You can read the Bible and pray; you can do anything else that you like; but do not say that you are a Christian. When you are away from your home town, however, you are free to do as you wish.' I told him: 'Father, the Lord Jesus is my Life; how can I live if I deny Him? If I do not breathe I cannot live physically. He is my Life, and if I deny Him I will die in one hour.' Then

he proposed another plan: 'If you want it that way, you can take up a job for three months; then people will say: "This man had a job, and resigned it when he became a Christian." Otherwise they will say that because you had no job you became a Christian'. I told him that if I got a job for one week or even for one day it would be possible to go astray because of my failure to honour God. In the sight of God one soul is of more value than all the wealth of the whole world. In this way God teaches the spiritual meaning of heavenly truths brought out in the life of Stephen, an unknown person, about whose family, native village, country or qualifications we know nothing, but who in the eyes of God was most precious.

In the world people who want to become great, work hard to win fame and a name for themselves. If they want to become an M.L.A. they will spend a great deal of money by going here and there, yet when they actually enter into the Council they have only to occupy the chair they sit on. In the meetings they simply sit, and occasionally have to shew their hands. They have no real concern for the country, nor any other qualifications for the job; they want only to have the letters M.L.A. attached to their name. How strange that men will work so hard just for a name!

This passage in Acts, however, shows how you and I can be chosen for heavenly fame and an eternal name. For example there may be some believers living in a village and you go there and ask: 'Do you know Subbarao?' and they will reply: 'No!' Though it is only a small village there are few who know his name. How different things are when such a man is chosen of God. Then you could go to heaven and ask any angel: 'Do you know Subbarao?' and he would say: 'Yes, I know him very well.' 'How do you happen to know him?' 'He has been chosen by our heavenly King, and our King Himself has told us of His choice.' Upon earth a man may be nothing, but when he is chosen by God

he will be acknowledged with joy and gladness by the heavenly host. The pity is that there are so few believers who are willing to be His chosen vessels. There are many who consider themselves to be very good Christians, who are quite satisfied to attend a service once a week, and give some money once a month. 'We do not harm anybody,' they say. 'We do not tell lies; we do not deceive anybody; we do not quarrel; we live a quiet life and go to church every Sunday for forty-five minutes; but we are too busy for prayer-meetings. If we go to such places, we go to sleep.' You may indeed be a fine Christian. Your standards may be high. But God wants more than that. He loves you; He bought you by His blood, so as to make you His chosen vessel, His peculiar treasure, His vineyard, His co-worker, and His eternal partner.

The first essential is to be like Stephen, not working for the sake of position. There are some people who, if you give them some position, will work day and night; but, if you do not give them a position, will hang back and do nothing. They are only working for a name. But we are told that Stephen did not work for honour or position. He worked quietly and lovingly, Acts 6. 1, 2.

When the number of the disciples was multiplied, and the Lord was working mightily, the devil brought in murmurings and grumblings among the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration, thus subtly bringing strife and quarrelling amongst God's people. Throughout the centuries the devil has been using two weapons to hinder the work of God and to prevent His servants from true service. Firstly, when God begins a work and His power is being manifested in lives, there come murmurings, complaints, and quarrelling among God's people, and through this the work is upset and hindered. A few of that type of murmuring believers can quench the Spirit of God and the work suffers.

Secondly, the devil tries to hinder God's servants from ministering the Word, and compels them instead to serve tables. He wanted the apostles to leave their important ministry and do this. You find the same tragedy in many parts of the world among the servants of God. God has called them to be preachers, teachers and evangelists, but now they are serving tables. For some time they are faithful, but when the work is increased, they become entangled with the world. There are others of God's servants who have worldly wives, and in order to keep peace at home their husbands have to work for them. Before marriage these men gave God's word the first place in their lives and spent much time in prayer and were full of zeal, but now they are dried up, and are going down slowly but steadily. First one child arrived, then a second, then a third, till there are five! Now those men spend the whole time washing napkins; that is their service; and when you ask them why there is no fruit in their ministry, they say the ground is very hard. But God's Word reveals the real secret of weakness. First things must be kept first; and by His grace we can do so. He will give us wisdom, even as He gave divine wisdom to His servants in Acts 6. 5. 'And the saying pleased the whole multitude', and they chose men like Stephen, who went quietly from house to house helping the people, and caring for the widows and the poor. They were known to nobody; their birth and history were a secret; they sought simply to serve wherever they saw the need; and when the time came, the whole multitude with one accord chose them because they had been watching their lives and had noted how they served without any show, and were yet at the same time full of the Holy Spirit and of divine wisdom for every service.

We too need the anointing of the Holy Spirit whatever the service may be, howsoever small or howsoever great. It may be only to serve the widows and the poor, or to look after the building, or to serve food or to lay mats or any

similar job in the house of God. Whatever it is we must have the anointing, and be filled with wisdom and the Holy Ghost, not seeking glory of men. We require Holy Ghost wisdom and divine anointing to find out what should be done in God's house and God's service, and we must do everything as unto Him and not as unto men.

Stephen had the desire to serve the Lord and the people. He was not longing to be a preacher. There are some who not only long to be preachers, but want only to preach on Sunday and to large congregations. They feel very happy when they are speaking and waving their arms about. They willingly accept the call to address a big meeting, saying: 'Yes, I will be only too glad to take the meeting!' Yet when the same men are asked to take a cottage meeting they will say: 'Brother, I am not feeling well today', or 'my wife has asked me to come early, as my baby is not too well. So please excuse me.' Such men can preach only to a crowd. Now Stephen was not that kind of man. He was not longing to be brought forward as a preacher. He was quite satisfied to serve tables, to give food and to attend to the poor. He served joyfully and they all knew that he was full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. He knew how to behave himself everywhere; how to be humble, meek, gentle and careful. Wisdom is manifested by the small things and the way they are done.

Do you also want to be a divinely chosen vessel? Then be willing and ready to do simple things joyfully, not for man's sake, but for God's; and God Himself will fill you with His Holy Spirit and wisdom. That is how Stephen came to be chosen as God's vessel. Acts 6. 8: 'And Stephen full of faith and power did great wonders and miracles among the people.' He was appointed only to look after the widows and business details, but it was soon manifest that he was a man of faith. He was not going round begging money from others. He could have said: 'I have been appointed by all

the multitude to look after these people. Now, we have so many widows in Jerusalem, and so many children, and so many babies. Please give more money for their support.' Imagine Stephen today in America, going about with long stories of need and distress, and asking: 'Please give dollars for the support of these widows and orphans.' O ye beggars of American dollars! be men of faith, learn how to trust God. He is a loving, mighty and unchangeable God. He can do all things. Why should His servants beg? Is it because they have no faith? Stephen was a man of faith, and by faith he saw the need supplied. God performed wonders and thus proclaimed Stephen as the man of His choice for the task. Has God chosen *you*?

If you are willing to do His will He will choose and make you a man of faith. You will be made to see the wonders of God's working. He is the Living God. In Acts 6. 10, we read: 'And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the power and the spirit by which he spake.' Stephen went about doing his job, and at the same time he gave the Word to all he met. He was a humble ordinary man, but a man also full of the Spirit of God, and a divine wisdom that could shut the mouths of the learned. It is only as you obey God that He will give you the divine wisdom to meet any situation and make of you a chosen vessel.

This should be the deepest desire of each one of us. Will you not respond to His call, that He may make of you His chosen vessel? Only thus can you become a man filled with power and the Spirit of God.

CHAPTER IV

CHOSEN AS A WITNESS

We have realized how God's choice, as exemplified in the life of Stephen, is dependent on willingness and obedience and faith. I would like to tell you my own experience, for I count it a great and wonderful thing that my Lord has chosen me. I want others also to realize how simple are the means by which He calls and speaks to us, lest they fail to hear when they are called by Him.

Soon after my conversion in the year 1930 in Winnipeg, Canada, I went to a service one Sunday morning. After the meeting I was standing outside, when a man came up and shook my hand. I can still feel his strong grip as he said to me: 'Brother, why don't you go and preach in India?' I replied: 'Brother, I am an engineer. I have spent so many years studying engineering; and to make things worse I stutter and stammer and am so nervous that I cannot stand before even a small group of people. When I see them my knees begin to shake. How can a stammering and stuttering man ever be a preacher?' He said nothing more, but for two full years those words were brought before me again and again. I could feel the same hand-grip, with the same words ringing in my heart: 'Why don't you? Why don't you?' I told the Lord: 'Lord, I promise that I will give all my money. I have no desire to build any building for myself, nor do I want comfort. I give you a promise to give all my money. By this means I can employ so many preachers; but please, please do not make *me* a preacher!'

But God said to me: 'I do not want your money. I want *you*!' For two full years these words came to me again and

again. I could not understand how a man like myself, with so many handicaps, could ever become a public speaker. I could not move my tongue at will. I could not sing a word, nor did I know even the ABC of music. How could such a man become a public speaker? I thought, however, I could serve the Lord with my money. In my folly and blindness I went on arguing with God for two full years, and never realized what I was doing. I thought it would be better to keep at my job, but God knew better. He is so loving and long-suffering and patient, and even though we grieve and fail and wound Him, yet He does not leave us. It is a mystery indeed why our God should ever choose us. It is because He has a right over us. He is my Creator and the mighty God, and He knows that when we yield ourselves to Him, and obey and follow Him, we shall know more fully and completely the power by which He works in and through us.

The same applies to salvation also. Why should God choose such as I who was so great a sinner. I remember in the year 1919, in the Punjab, how, in my blindness, I tore the Holy Bible, to show my hatred for it and the Christians. I uttered words of blasphemy against God and His people, and eventually became a slave to every evil device. Yet my Lord, when He revealed Himself to me, never condemned me, saying, 'You did this, and that!' but I myself began to see my sins. His very presence disclosed my sins. Nobody told me what I should do or what I should not do. His presence took away even the wrong desires from me. He Himself came to me; I never went to Him, for I was, in fact, going away from Him. I had turned my back on Him, but unknown to me He was following me step by step.

I thank the Lord that in the year 1929, on December 16th, the mighty Lord said these words to me: 'This is my body broken for you; this is my blood of the New Testament shed for the remission of your sins.' I heard these words in

my own room without going to any meeting, nor did anybody speak to me or give me a gospel, nor did I know the meaning of the words 'salvation' or 'new birth'. I did not know who is Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, nor even the meaning of the word 'Matthew', nor whether it referred to a man or a woman or a city or a village! You may laugh at me, but I was as blind as that! That morning, after my Lord had uncovered my sins, I said: 'Is there any hope for a sinner like me? I have money but no peace. I have education but there is nothing but defeat in my life. Outwardly I am a cultured man, but inwardly a rogue. O Lord, is there hope for a man like me?'

Then it was those words came to me very clearly and plainly and lovingly: 'This is my body broken for you; this is my blood of the New Testament shed for the remission of your sins.' I replied: 'O God, I am far too stupid to know the meaning of these words.' Then a Voice came: 'My son, go! thy sins be forgiven thee.' The matter was settled. That is how He chose me. I was a blasphemer, a slave to every sin, utterly blind spiritually, yet He sought me and chose me. I know it! I believe it! He is mine and I am His! May the voice of the loving Saviour come also to your ears, and as you go on obeying Him and following Him, He Himself will teach you all His will.

We have seen how the Lord chose this man Stephen. We have seen also in Psa. 106. 4, 5, how the psalmist longs for three things: '*That I may see the good of thy chosen; that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation; that I may glory with thine inheritance.*' That is true spiritual prayer. How often we pray only for earthly perishing things. In school days and college days we pray before an examination: 'O God, help me to pass!' There are young men and women who pray: 'Lord, give me a wife, or a husband, with very high qualifications—with at least the qualification of B.A.' A young man may demand a woman who is not too fat,

and not too tall, and passably fair in colour, and, of course, a graduate!—though he himself may be black and a failed matric! Others may pray for a job, or for promotion. Their prayers are only for perishing things, without understanding the things that are real and eternal. Let them but pray with these words of Psa. 106. 5, and the Lord will surely give all these other things beside.

We have seen how the Lord chose Stephen. He was just an ordinary man, concerning whose family or parents or circumstances we know nothing; but suddenly he comes on the scene, and we find this chosen vessel being occupied with simple jobs, doing ordinary service for poor people and widows without any reward. All men began to see, however, that he was indeed no ordinary person. His longing was to please God and his life was full of victory. Because he chose to obey God, he was full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, full of faith and power. This is the privilege of those who are chosen by Him. When you have a longing in your heart to do God's will, wait on God, and you will see that, in His own way, He will give you the desire of your heart. You do not have to shout and fight for the fulfilment of your hopes. Just begin to obey Him and His Word, and receive the Word into your heart, and you will find the virtues you have longed for manifested in your life. You will become God's chosen vessel according to His purpose.

In Acts 6. 13–15, we see how the leading men of the nation set up false witness against Stephen. The elders and the scribes were stirred up and came upon Stephen and caught him and brought him to the council, and began to bring accusation against him, and while they were saying false things, all in the council looked upon his face, and were surprised to see it shining like an angel's. There were so many people against one person. The whole Sanhedrim was against him; one by one they brought false accusations;

and yet his face was shining like an angel's. It shone even more brightly in that time of persecution. What a salvation! What a vessel! What a privilege to have such a shining face!

The world spends much money on beauty. Men and women use beauty creams and powders and soaps. Women will go to the best beauty parlours in the city, and spend half an hour to forty minutes there, in order to come out with a face shining with cream and powder. But such beauty does not last. When they go for breakfast, cold coffee and stale *oopuma* may be served, and the face at once changes colour! They are probably thinking: 'Look at my hair so nicely oiled and curled, my fine clothes and shining face, and yet they have the cheek to give me stale food!' Where has that shining face gone to?

Again you hear perhaps of others speaking against you, or you hear a rumour that somebody has said untrue and shameful things about you; so you come home looking very sad. The wife says: 'Please come and have tea,' but you reply: 'I have no appetite.' She calls you again, but again you say: 'I have no appetite,' and so it goes on. You cannot sleep, and you go about sighing. But when you become God's chosen, anointed and filled vessel, your face will shine the brighter, the more you are ill-treated. Even though men may hate you, and say many untrue and false things about you, your face will still shine like an angel's. In poverty, or whatever your circumstances may be, you will still have a shining face. You may drink cold coffee and eat stale food and still keep a shining face. A shining face wherever you go, that is God's purpose and plan for every believer.

When we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, His light will first of all come into the heart, then on the face, then on the path. A threefold divine light. Have you become in this

sense God's chosen vessel? Have you such a shining face that your wife is compelled to say: 'Is he really my husband? Is he the same man? Before he was a hard-looking man, but now he has such a loving and tender look on his face. What has happened?' The Lord, not preachers nor sermons, but the living God, has given you a shining face; and if this is so, your face will shine more and more day by day, in spite of trials, troubles, tribulations and difficulties. It is by such a shining face that we defeat the enemy. There was no need for an advocate to defend Stephen. His shining face was an advocate for him. It should be the same with you. Even though others may hate you, persecute you or ill-treat you, you should still have the light upon your face as a witness and testimony to them. 2 Cor. 4. 6. As you are found waiting upon the Lord, there will be even more light upon your face. Unknown to you, others will see the light of God upon your face, and in that day you will thank God even for suffering.

Note how Stephen defends himself in Acts 7. 2. He is not saying: 'O *enemy*, hearken!' He says: 'My *brethren*, hearken!' The whole crowd is against him, yet he is calling them 'brethren', and his face is shining so brightly. Somehow he knew what they were thinking in their hearts, and his message gave the answer: 'The God of glory appeared to Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran'. He speaks of God as '*the God of glory*'. The Jews were so proud of their forefathers. They would say our Abraham, our Isaac, our Jacob, our Moses, and so on; but they never knew why God appeared to Abraham. There are so many Christians who say proudly that they are not heathen, who boast that they are Christians, but who do not know even what is the meaning of the word: 'Christian'. That was the condition of those Jews. They did not know how or why God had appeared to Abraham. Stephen, being filled with the Holy Spirit announced: 'It was as the God of glory that God appeared unto Abraham.' For what

purpose? That as a nation the seed of Abraham might have that very same glory. But Israel had forgotten all about it. From the very beginning it was God's plan for them that His glory might fill them. For this reason, when the work on the tabernacle, and later on the temple, was finished, we read that 'the glory of the Lord filled the place.' Exod. 40. 34, and 2 Chron. 7. 1. Solomon's temple and the tabernacle were both filled with the glory of God. God had not asked for gold or silver from them, but a place to be filled with His glory. They were taught how they themselves could be filled with God's glory. But they had entirely forgotten about it. Their eyes were only on themselves, and on the temple and its magnificence. They were so proud of the temple which was made with hands; but the God of glory had appeared that they might see His glory, and might themselves be indwelt by His glory. God does not live in buildings made by hands. He wants to live in a living temple. 2 Cor. 6. 16: 'And ye are the temple of the living God', God is saying: 'I will dwell in them and walk in them.' God wants a temple that His people may learn the divine law by which they can be indwelt by Him. This does not mean that they shall see God's glory for a moment only, but shall be filled and indwelt by that glory for eternity.

What is God's purpose in choosing you? He does not want your money, your gold or your silver, but He wants *you*. He wants you that His glory may fill you, that His presence may be with you, that you may live anew and walk anew. God wants your body to be His temple, so that His glory may come into you. That is the reason why He has chosen you.

Are you willing and desirous and ready to be filled with divine glory? Then your face will shine. You may be anywhere or at any place, among friends or enemies, in loneliness or bad circumstances, but your face will shine; in any family, neighbourhood or condition, in health or sickness,

but still your face will shine. Why ? Because when you have allowed the God of glory to enter into your heart as His temple, you will know the truth of the indwelling of the God of glory.

May God help us to see His glory and to reflect it in our faces.

CHAPTER V

CHOSEN FOR HIS GLORY

We have seen how the psalmist longed for three things: to see the good of God's chosen, to rejoice in the gladness of His nation, and to glory with His inheritance. So far we have mediated on the first part: 'That I may see the good of thy chosen.' The first necessity is to be God's chosen vessel and to come into the hand of the Lord. This demands a willingness on our part. After this step it will be made clear how the Lord will bring us into the other two experiences, which lead the one into the other. The Lord has brought before us the life of Stephen to make this clear.

Now we come to the second part: 'that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation.' Let us look again at Acts 7. 1, 2: 'Then said the High Priest, Are these things so? And Stephen said: 'Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken: the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.' We have seen how God's chosen vessel was persecuted by the enemy, and how as they began to bring false charges against him, his face began to shine as the face of an angel. They wondered how this could be; and he, being God's vessel, began with these words full of deep meaning to show how the God of glory had planned from the very beginning to bring His people into glory. In verses 1 to 50 he narrated the whole history of the nation to show God's purpose in choosing that nation.

We can divide the story into seven types. The first three are represented by Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. From

these we pass to Egypt, the wilderness, Canaan, and the divine temple built by King Solomon. Stephen began his account with Abraham and ended with Solomon. He could go no further, for his accusers were very angry with him, but he had said all that was necessary. Stephen had revealed the secret that God had been preparing His nation that they might receive from Him a great heavenly joy. 2 Chron. 7. 1–3. That was the happiest day for them as God's people, the zenith of the whole history of the nation. When the work of the temple had been completed according to the heavenly plan given by God, the fire came down and consumed the sacrifice, and then God's glory filled the whole temple. All the children of Israel bowed themselves with their faces to the ground, and worshipped and praised the Lord. They were filled with heavenly joy, for they had never seen such a thing before. It was truly the happiest day in their history, the day when God, the mighty and living God, the holy yet loving God, came down in their midst in the fulness of His glory, and every heart was filled with perfect peace. All their enemies had been subdued; the whole kingdom was full of peace and righteousness; and the temple was filled with the divine presence. Such was the joy and gladness that the psalmist was referring to in Psa. 106, when he prayed: 'that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation.' It was not an earthly joy, but a heavenly joy, a joy which could not be shared with everyone in the world. The psalmist longed for the joy that comes when the Living God lives and works among His people.

How did they come to that position? First, God chose Abraham, and through him Isaac and Jacob. In the lifetime of Jacob they went to Egypt, from whence they came to the wilderness, and after wandering there for forty years, came into the promised land of Canaan. Even in the land they had many years of waiting and suffering, but at last in the temple, they saw the fulfilment of God's plan when He filled His house with His glory.

There is a deep significance in the way God chooses His men for His purpose. Is there not something in the fact that Abraham's wife was barren, Isaac's wife was barren, and Jacob's wife, Rachel, also was barren? Surely God is showing how, of ourselves, we are barren. Sin came into the world, and brought the whole world into a state of barrenness, and that barrenness cannot be removed by human effort. Israel was barren for many years that men might know that because of sin we remain barren. A man may earn much money, or have a high position, but before God he will remain barren and unfruitful if there is nothing in his life for God. God wants those things which will last for eternity. The first lesson God wants us to learn as human beings is that we are by nature barren and unfruitful.

Miraculously God gave a child to Abraham in his old age. Abraham and his wife had become very old, and had lost every human hope of having a child. They were like a dry tree, but God had promised, and He kept His promise and put new life in their bodies. That is how Isaac was born, and his birth speaks of the power of resurrection; a death-conquering power. Do you want heavenly joy; the joy of fruitfulness? Then the first thing is to learn the power of His resurrection, and to know that the same power is available to you to conquer death and barrenness in your life. That is why our Lord died and rose again. When He was on the cross, some began to say: 'If thou art the Christ, come down, and then we will believe thee.' But He never came down. He died and was buried and rose again. Why? That He might make available to us the power of His resurrection.

Isaac is another type. Gen. 26. 12: 'The Lord blessed him', and 'he became very great'; (verse 16): And Abimelech said unto Isaac: 'Go from us, for thou art much mightier than we.' He, being God's chosen vessel, pros-

pered wherever he went, and, in a short time, became a very wealthy man. Then all the men of the land became jealous and said: 'Go away from us!' and the herdmen of Gerar provoked him to strife, (verse 20), hatred and enmity, but God told him to go to a new place. There again, Isaac became prosperous and very great, and again the men became jealous of him, and tried to provoke him to strife and hatred and bitterness; but he kept on moving under the guidance of God till he came to a place called Beersheba; a far better place. The Philistines tried to question his possession, but God was with him, because he refused to be led into strife, hatred and enmity; and finally, when he came to Beersheba, the place of covenant, God said to him: 'Fear not, for I am with thee; and will bless thee.' (verse 24).

When a man is blessed by God, he is bound to be opposed and hated. Men will try to drag him into hatred, strife and enmity in order to rob him of his joy, and to weaken his faith and disturb his peace. The devil will try many means to bring God's people into strife and hatred, and seek somehow to take away their joy, peace and faith. Is it thus with you? Then keep on moving in the direction God indicates and refuse to be involved in hatred, strife and jealousy, and God will bring you at last to Beersheba. He will give you much more than you ever had before. Our Lord said in John 16. 20, 22: 'Your sorrow will be turned into joy, and your joy no man taketh from you.' Even though the Philistines may try to rob you of your joy and peace, and try to provoke you, irritate you, make you angry and drag you into strife, take warning and be like Isaac. Refuse to be dragged into strife, hatred and jealousy whether with your wife or husband, brother or sister, friend or neighbour or preacher. Flee away from strife and hatred and enmity till you come to Beersheba, and God will surely give you much more than even you had before. That is the message of Isaac.

Even before the birth of Jacob God purposed to make him a prince, but Jacob was deceived by his own mother. She loved him so much, and he did what she commanded, and tried to realize the promise of God in a wrong way. It was only after many years of struggle that he became a prince with God and men.

There are many Christians in India who are beggars. Even in America and Europe there are many beggars! There are begging pastors and begging preachers. They ask for money for a new church building, for gospel work, or for a campaign, and feel they are quite justified in begging for money. They make strong appeals. 'Give liberally! give liberally!' they cry, 'we want money for missionary work in Africa, or India, or Australia, etc. People are dying of starvation. Who will go to China, (or to some other place)?' Then somebody comes forward and says: 'I want to go to India. My heart is stirred to go to India,' (or it may be to China, or some other place). The next thing to do is to send out an appeal, saying: 'I want to go to India, will you please help?' and the candidate goes begging from place to place asking: 'Who will promise to give me five dollars, or even one dollar?' Can such people truly say that they are sent from God? O ye beggars, ye beggars! God wants to make you princes; not earthly princes, but God's princes. God wants to give you His best. Learn to go to God for everything, and not to man. Instead, like Jacob, men go on scheming and planning. They want the birthright, but there is no need to beg Esau for the birthright. God can give much more than anyone can ask or think. The pity is that many of us are only 'Jacob' Christians, belly Christians, greedy Christians, while God is saying: 'Behold Israel, you are a prince, you are a priest, you are my friend, my co-labourer. Come to me and I will answer you.' From the life of Jacob God wants to teach us how to become princes and partners with God.

Then came Egypt. The children of Israel remained there for four hundred years. Their numbers multiplied and Pharaoh became bitter against them. Then they called upon God for deliverance. God allowed them to be in bondage all those years, but at their request, God sent them a saviour in Moses. God allowed them to remain in bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt for so long that they might learn how cruel and unkind and wicked was the enemy. When they first came to Egypt they were very happy. They had everything in plenty, but they were far away from their homeland. They were in enemy territory.

There are so many people these days who say there is no death or hell; modern preachers who serve the devil. They find a pleasure in serving him, and in making fun of God's people and calling them old-fashioned. They say that God made the world for their enjoyment, and in their folly they go on following the world and serving the devil and struggling with the lust of the flesh. There are also many carnal Christians living in sin and darkness. They say they are born again, but they are slaves to many worldly devices. They do not know how wicked the devil is and are in bondage to him. The children of Israel were in bondage for four hundred years till they had learned the hardness of the heart of Pharaoh. They had to work from early morning till night, carrying heavy stones, and bearing heavy burdens, without proper wages, till at last, in their misery, they prayed: 'O God, deliver us; see our affliction and our tears,' and God heard their crying and sent them a saviour. But before they could be delivered God sent ten plagues upon Egypt. Why? That the people might realize the deceptiveness of the enemy. Every servant of God must learn how wicked and cunning is the enemy who is trying to drag God's children into darkness. When he forgets the power of the dominion of Satan and darkness, the servant of God will surely come into bondage.

When the children of Israel came into the wilderness they were made to wander there for forty years, doing no work, having no field and owning no building. As for their food the Lord said: 'I will send manna every day.' They had to do one thing, however, and that was to remain in the place where they had pitched their tents till God's cloud over the tabernacle moved forward. Num. 9. 18–22. Sometimes the cloud would stay for a day or two; sometimes for many months. Sometimes it would be lifted in the morning, sometimes during the day, and sometimes at midnight. Immediately the cloud moved they had to go forward, whatever the time of day or night, and whatever the direction it might take. They could not go as and where they liked while they were in the wilderness. They were God's people, and they must be led, governed and controlled by God in everything. It was a simple lesson, but one which was very hard for them to learn. God wants you and me to learn the same lesson; to learn to be led by the Spirit, Rom. 8. 14. God's people are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is Saviour and also Guide. The child of God must be controlled and governed by Him alone. This is only possible when we die to our own will, and it takes many years to learn that lesson.

There are so many people who are governed by their wives, or husbands, or children, or neighbours, or friends, or by some man or woman, and not by God. How many men have heard the voice of God in a meeting, but when they go home and consult their wives, the latter say: 'Don't be foolish. You have a wife and three children to consider. This path is not for you.' Others are governed by those who make them sin. They live in shame and are governed by lust, greed and vanity. They ask: 'What will our friends and neighbours say?' Is it any wonder that such have to wander in the wilderness for forty years to learn the simple lesson of how to be completely and entirely controlled by God.

From the wilderness God's people came to Canaan, the land of promise, the land flowing with milk and honey, in itself a symbol of God's provision for His people. In John 6. 55, we are told that God had given them a land which was unique in every way; a fertile land, full of plenty in every part. They had everything in abundance, and in it God was saying to them: 'O my people, my people, I have made abundant provision for you. God is your sufficiency, provided you know how to feed and feast on Him, and enjoy the land.'

God commanded them never to make any covenant or league with the inhabitants of the land, nor to intermarry with them, yet by disobedience they failed God. When the men of Gibeon came to Joshua they put on old shoes and clothes, and brought old mouldy bread, saying: 'We are coming from a far country; we have heard about you; please make a league with us.' Without seeking God's counsel, Joshua made a league and the same men became a snare to them. Gradually mixed marriages were entered into, idol worship and other forbidden things became the rule of the day, and the people became blind spiritually.

If a child of God wants to enjoy the heavenly Canaan there has to be a life of utter separation from the world and worldly ways and pleasures. Why is there barrenness among God's people everywhere? They have good teaching and yet they are blind and barren. One cause is the league and covenant so many make with the world, some in the matter of clothing and fashions, some by marriage, and others by business. How can such know the provision in the Lord Jesus Christ? He is our heavenly meat and drink, and gives abundant satisfaction; but you must be true to Him. Perhaps it will mean that some will have to remain unmarried for many years, because of the difficulty of finding a truly spiritual husband or wife; but it is better so than to live a life of pleasure and to remain spiritually barren.

You have to bring God's Word into everything, whether it be your family life, your spiritual life, or your church life. Only then can you enjoy abundant life and perfect peace. 'I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly', John 10. 10. Only then can He give joy unspeakable and full of glory, and all power, and the whole kingdom. Christ is my Canaan, He is my satisfaction, and He gives me all things in abundance. There are many Christians who are like some rivers which remain dry for ten months in the year; wide rivers, but without water for ten or eleven months. Then the monsoon comes and there is water for one month only; a shallow flood that has no life. Christ is willing to give always and everywhere the *fulness* of His everlasting peace and joy and power. That is Canaan.

Later came the building of the temple. God chose David, and after many years of suffering, he was given the heavenly plan, 1 Chron. 28. 19. God also showed David the site for the temple. David gave the plan and material to Solomon and the latter built the temple. Solomon was a man of peace, and the work was done, not only in times of peace, but the very labour also was performed in conditions of peace and quietness. No one heard any sound of axe or hammer till every small detail given in God's plan was complete. Then the king and the people brought sacrifices and offerings, and suddenly fire fell from heaven, and the whole temple was filled with God's glory. What a wonderful sight that must have been! The whole nation rejoiced to see the power of God. The mighty God, the Living God, had come to dwell among them. The whole nation rejoiced in the privilege of having such a God in their midst. This, in the words of the psalmist, was 'the gladness of His nation', in which he rejoiced also by faith, and in which we too rejoice both by faith and also by experience.

God has chosen you and me to make of us a spiritual people. Those people saw God's glory, but in their pride they be-

came blind and remained in darkness. What they could not see is now being revealed in the church which is God's true temple. The temple of Solomon was destroyed. It was a wonderful temple, but it had to be destroyed. It was not eternal. But now God is building a temple through you and me; an everlasting temple that cannot be shaken. It is not builded with stone or gold or silver or brass or timber, but it is builded of living stones, on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is our heavenly Solomon. He is Builder as well as Foundation. He is now building you and me into the Temple, to show God's glory for eternity; and this is *our* rejoicing, and *His* inheritance. The Lord's inheritance is His people. Deut. 32. 9; Psa. 78. 71.

In my college days the Prince of Wales came to India, and it was the days of non-cooperation on the part of the Congress. We all refused to go to any party given at that time in Lahore. One student amongst us, however, went to the party, and when he returned we went to shake hands with him, but he refused to shake hands with us. When we asked what was the matter, he replied: 'I have shaken hands with the Prince of Wales.' What a wonderful thing it will be to dwell with the King of glory for eternity and to be filled with His glory and fulness. That hope gives me heavenly joy, and it is for that purpose He has chosen us; not to make us members of any earthly group or society, but to make us members of the heavenly temple, and to give us heavenly joy for eternity. This is my gladness, my joy and hope, that even I can be a member of the heavenly temple, and rejoice in the gladness of God's people, and glory with God's inheritance.

Note the steps by which God led His nation. He led Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob as individuals, then He led His people to Egypt, then through the wilderness, then into Canaan, then to the building of the temple, and to the

glory of God dwelling in the midst of His people with heavenly splendour and power.

O rejoice, for your Saviour loves you. He wants to make you His heavenly nation, greater than all earthly nations. Let Him lead you now, and then you will know for yourself the joy the Lord can give. When you sing the heavenly songs you will be filled with unspeakable joy. Though I cannot sing a note myself, I can enjoy music and spiritual songs. When I first heard spiritual songs after my conversion, I felt I was in heaven, the music seemed so heavenly sweet; but the music of heaven is far more glorious.

O come to God! Let Him choose you, whoever you may be, or however shameful your life may have been. However great your sins may be, humble yourself and confess them, that you may become in God's hand His chosen vessel. Say from your heart: 'Lord, I am not worthy to come to Thee for I am so filthy and corrupt, but I can hear Thy voice and Thy loving invitation. Lord, I believe Thy voice; accept me, even me; wash me by Thy blood and make me Thy chosen vessel, filled with the fulness of Thy power, to Thy glory. Amen!'

CHAPTER VI

CHOSEN FOR ETERNITY

We now come to the last part of the verses from Psa. 106. 4, 5: 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people. O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, *that I may glory with thy inheritance.*' We want to leave this study with these words deeply engraved on our hearts. Our prayer is that the experience of these verses may be the experience of each one, and that whatever has been expressed in human limitation may be made clear to you by the Holy Spirit.

Note the deep longing of the psalmist in these verses, and, with him, make the last part of verse 5 your own—'*that I may glory with thine inheritance.*' When we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, we become partakers of the great eternal inheritance, just like a child who is born into a wealthy family. Even though the child may be without qualifications, yet he has all the privileges of his father's property.

One of my relatives was a very wealthy man. When he died he left behind a great inheritance in property and cash. He had much land and houses in different places. The inheritance fell to his two sons, the eldest of which is very clever and the younger rather stupid. When the father died these two brothers got together to divide the family property. The elder one said to the younger: 'It will be a great bother to you to collect the bills for rent and for the use of

the land, etc. You have no strength and not much education. Now I will give you a portion in cash, and you can give me the power of attorney.' The younger brother said: 'How much will you give me?' 'I will give you Rs: 5,000/- and you must give me in writing that you have received your portion.' But the younger brother said: 'Even though I am stupid, I know that half the property is my share; so you take half and give me half. Even though I myself cannot calculate, I can employ an accountant to help me. Give me the books, please, and we will get an accountant to tell us our portion.' The elder brother said: 'This is a private family matter. Why do you want an outsider to know our secret? Let us agree peaceably. If you are not satisfied with Rs: 5,000/-, then I will give you Rs: 10,000/-. That is nothing to be referred to an accountant. Rs: 10,000/- will last for your whole life-time; why should you bother with an accountant?' The younger brother insisted: 'Though I am stupid, I want my half-portion. It may be one thousand or three thousand or more, but I will be satisfied only with my rightful portion. You bring the books, and I will bring the accountant! Again the elder brother said: 'Why should an outsider know our secrets? I will give you Rs: 15,000/-.'

'No! no! I want only my portion, even if it is only four or five thousand. Please bring the books.' 'You don't want to go outside,' repeated his brother. 'I will give you Rs: 25,000/-; that is a quarter lakh, your rightful share.' And so it went on till he got more than a lakh! Why? Because he had the inward assurance that his father had left him half the property. Even though he was a stupid, simple and foolish boy, yet he wanted his full portion.

It does not require worldly knowledge or education to demand an earthly portion. But for us as believers sometimes it takes many years to learn the value of our heavenly inheritance. Let us learn it now. The Word of God is so clear and plain that when we receive our Lord as our per-

sonal Saviour, we are given the right and authority to become the sons of God. We are God's sons for eternity, because of His everlasting love, which we have received by faith. We have a share in the inheritance of the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't require to know Hebrew or Greek to know that truth, but have the inward assurance of the Holy Spirit. The enjoyment of the inheritance depends upon your faith. Rom. 8. 17, 18: '*And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.*' These things go together. If you can say: 'I am a child of God', then automatically you can say also: 'I am the heir of God, and fellow-heir with the Lord Jesus Christ.'

We cannot understand now the full meaning of that inheritance, but we know a day is coming when we shall know all about it. A small boy knows that his father possesses property and wealth. But if you question him as to how much land, property and wealth the father has, he will say: 'I don't know!' He is too young to know now, but when he becomes mature he will be able to understand the full extent of his father's possessions. So, while we cannot understand now how great is our inheritance, when we see our Lord face to face, and when the work of grace is perfected, we shall know everything.

You must believe that you are called and chosen for a great and everlasting inheritance. By receiving Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord we enter into a full spiritual partnership. First of all we become partakers of the divine nature: 2 Pet. 1. 4. Secondly, we are partakers of the Holy Spirit; Heb. 6. 4. Thirdly, we are partakers of the heavenly calling; Heb. 3. 1. Fourthly, we are partakers of God's holiness: Heb. 12. 12. Fifthly, we are partakers of the glory to be revealed; 1 Pet. 5. 11. Sixthly, we are partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; Col. 1. 12. Seventhly, we are partakers of the Lord Himself; Heb. 3. 14.

How wonderful to be partakers of God's heavenly inheritance. Our loving God has chosen us to bring us into that spiritual, incorruptible and glorious inheritance which He wants us to enjoy. You must believe that you have a share in that inheritance. There are so many believers who think only of salvation in terms of going to heaven. They think that God is merciful and forgives sins so that they can go to heaven, and it does not matter whether they are given even only a small corner, so long as they are there. It is like travelling by the Howrah express! That train is usually crowded and often there is not even standing room. The whistle goes off as you arrive on the platform. You want to get inside somehow, for you must go by that train, so by the help of the coolies you get inside and stand in some corner. You say: 'Anyway I have found a corner. Nothing matters so long as I am on the train!' Is your conception of heaven so limited that it does not matter what old corner you have there? You may say: 'We do not want to be like preachers or sadhus or sanyasis. We have to be in the world, we have to earn money, and we have to live among earthly people, so how can we give up everything?' That is how the enemy deceives you and deprives you of your share in the heavenly inheritance. You have to *claim* your share and enjoy it by living an overcoming life. The Lord Himself says in Rev. 21. 7: 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son.'

If you question a child: 'Who is this man?' or 'Who is that woman?' the child, who is holding the hand of his father or mother, will answer: 'He is my dad', or 'She is my mother'. He knows his inheritance. Even if you inherit all the things of the new creation, you will have no greater claim than that over your Lord. You will be able to say: 'He is my Lord, my own God; I can go to Him at any time, and anywhere.' In this way we are given a foretaste of heaven upon this earth.

In the early days of your new life, as you kneel to pray, you may think of prayer in terms of earthly things. A small child on board a ship would go out every morning with her doll and play with the captain. One day the doll fell into the sea, and she pleaded with him to stop the ship. The captain asked why. She said: 'My doll has fallen into the sea, and I want it.' The captain said: 'How can I stop such a big ship for the sake of one small doll? If a man falls into the sea I can stop it, but not for the sake of a small doll.' The child turned away from the captain and said: 'You are a bad man! a very bad man!' Presently the ship came into a port, and the child and her parents went to a hotel. It happened that the captain went to the same place, and when he saw the child he went to a shop and bought a very large and beautiful doll, and took it back to the hotel. There he put it on the table and called the child. 'Come, my child, and see what I have brought you,' he said. Again the child turned away her face and said: 'You are a very bad man!' Then the captain slowly untied the box, removed the lid and showed her the doll. The child saw it and cried: 'Is it for me? for me? You are a very good man!' and she hugged the captain and thanked him.

It is the same with us. We ask God only for earthly things. If God answers our prayer we say: 'He is a very good God!' We go to every meeting, and take part in many activities. But when troubles, trials and sorrows come, or someone dies in the family, then we ask: 'Where is God? where is He? I am not going to the meeting any more, and I am not going to give Him any more money. Look at Him! I have done so many good deeds and yet the Lord has laid upon me so many trials. He has forsaken me and forgotten me.' Is that true? You are His child. His ways are higher than your ways. He has called you to a glorious heavenly inheritance, and the enjoyment of the inheritance depends upon your ability to overcome. In Rom. 8. 18, we read that it does not matter how great and painful our sufferings are,

for they are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in and through us. We must believe from our hearts that God has called us to His glorious kingdom; 1 Thess. 2. 12. I believe God has called *me* to His glorious kingdom; and if we believe that truth, we shall walk worthy of His calling.

I have five brothers, and the one younger to me became a high officer some years ago. One day, as we were travelling together, he told me: 'Now I can no longer travel in the third class.' I said: 'All these years you have travelled in the third class!' but he answered: 'I am now a magistrate, and it is beneath my dignity. Even if I have to borrow the money I must go first class to keep up the dignity of my position.' That is a very poor illustration of a great truth. If you believe that you have been called by your God for His kingdom and glory, then you will seek to walk worthy of your calling. You are a child of God, His partner and vessel, and a king, a prince and a priest. Walk worthy of Him.

We have to be prepared for that glorious heavenly calling through manifold trials and temptations, hardships and difficulties, and we have no right to tell Him how to train us. When you go to any College or University you cannot say to the professor: 'Mr. Professor, I am a graduate; I come from a wealthy family, and so I can tell you how to teach!' You have no right to speak in that way. You have to learn what *he* teaches, as he knows what is best for you. God only knows what is best for us. God only knows how to train us, and His chastening, rebuke and trial are for some purpose.

There is one thing more about an inheritance. An inheritance is something which we obtain through our parents. For example, I have inherited my father's nature or character. If you were to see me, together with my father,

grandfather, and the rest of the family, you would say: 'You people have a strong family resemblance!' My father has a habit of putting his hand up, and I also have that habit, so those who have seen both me and my father are apt to say: 'How like your father you are!'

Some young men are very clever, and you might say: 'He cannot be a Punjabi, he is far too clever. Maybe he is from Andhra.' No! no! he is far too clever, perhaps he is a Bengali. 'No! he is too clever even for a Bengali.' Then what is he? a Malayali? 'That is possible! He is so clever, he must be a Malayali.' There is also an inheritance bound up with the nationality which we receive from our parents. In the same way, as God's children, the character of our Heavenly Father, and the traits of our heavenly nationality must be manifest in us. As sinners we are full of sins, shame and defilement, but after conversion we find some divine virtues in evidence. These are not from family or generation, nor from earthly nationality, but from our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord's qualities and virtues are being transferred to us—kindness, gentleness, love, long-suffering, patience and forbearance. This is our heavenly inheritance, which we have not received from our parents or teachers or preachers or professors, but from the life of God in us. However, there must be a willingness on our part for these virtues to be manifested in our lives.

If a child is born in a royal family, from the day of birth he is a prince, and everybody knows it. Maybe the child is very black, with thick lips, long ears and a bald head, but still he is a prince. As children of God we have become kings and priests. That is our privilege: Rev. 1. 6. Do not think these words are meant only for apostles, martyrs and prophets. They are for everyone. All those who are washed, cleansed and purged by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ are born into the heavenly family, and are made princes and priests unto God.

In the olden days in India there was a special royal college for the princes of India, where they were taught to read and write, and also how to reign and behave as kings. So also in God's College of Life we are taught how to reign in life, and to behave as the sons of the Heavenly King.

In these days men find it hard to get a seat in any college. They go from college to college and town to town, trying to get a seat. God's way of training is very different. Take the life of David as an example. David fled before his enemies, and had to hide in the dark cave of Adullam. He may have felt that God had forsaken him, a man supposed to be a king, in every way a man of ability, and a man after God's own heart. Why did God allow him to wander in the wilderness, and caves and desert places ? Why did He allow Saul to pursue him for eight long years ? That was God's University and Training College for David, where he learned many great divine truths, where he composed many new songs, and where God gave him mighty men as co-workers. Years later, when he had passed every test, one day God Himself appeared to him and gave him a heavenly pattern. David was given the plan of the temple as he says in 1 Chron. 28. 19: 'All this . . . the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.' I believe that was the happiest day in David's life, when the Lord's hand was upon him, and he obeyed the heavenly plan. But God could not give him that honour in the beginning. He had to go through all those trials in order to be prepared. This is the divine way in which, perhaps, God is now training and preparing *you*. A day will come in your life when you will see clearly the heavenly plan of God.

Again, by inheritance you have also a future. If you are born into God's royal family you know that one day you will have to reign in His kingdom for ever and ever, and you are being prepared for that. When Queen Victoria was a small girl

she did not know that she was going to be a queen. She was very fond of playing with dolls, and instructions were given to those in the family not to tell her that she was going to be Queen one day. At last she discovered that she was heir to the throne. 'Is it true ? is it true ?' she asked everybody in the palace. 'Is it true that I am going to be Queen of England ?' From that day she stopped playing with dolls. She became serious, and said: 'I have to reign a very vast kingdom: I must be very serious.' Now we, too, must learn how to reign. By inheritance we are given all the power of God, but we must learn how to use it, and are being trained for that purpose.

Similarly, if you inherit a wealthy property, you have to learn how to administer that property. There are some princes in India who keep their wealth in strong houses. They are satisfied and say: 'I have so much wealth—diamonds, gold, precious stones and silver', but it only remains there and is admired. Heavenly wealth, however, has to be made use of, and we are being trained how to use it.

The knowledge of a profession is sometimes acquired by inheritance. If from childhood you learn a trade, at an early age you become a carpenter or a goldsmith. Others will take years to learn the same trade, but those who are born in the family of a goldsmith will very quickly learn the profession. In the same way you share God's wisdom from the time of your new birth, and become a co-worker of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, we are chosen to be the inheritance of God Himself. When parents divide their property, all the children get a portion, but, at the same time, parents will feel very happy if they receive something from their children. Parents long to give their love to their children. Our Heavenly Father loves us with an everlasting love. That is our heavenly

inheritance. Let us enjoy His love in its fulness, the love of the Heavenly Father, Friend and Bridegroom. But He also longs to be satisfied in us. How much do we love Him? Alas! how often we are ashamed of our heavenly inheritance and our Heavenly Father.

When I was in our hostel at school, my father once came to see me. He was an old-fashioned man with a very big turban, and a long *vashti* and wearing country shoes. He had come to see me, and brought me ghee and sweets and gave me cash. Then one of my friends saw him, so he called me outside and asked: 'Who is that man?' I replied that he was an old man from my village. You may laugh at my folly, but it is quite true. I took my father's money and everything he brought, but was ashamed to confess him as my father. He had also brought me an English suit, and yet I was such a proud young man as to disown him.

Alas! there are many believers who are ashamed to own the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. When they go among friends and neighbours they are ashamed of Him, and yet when they are in trouble they cry: 'O Lord, help me; help me; I want your help!' The Lord readily helps, but that does not satisfy His heart. He wants us to be perfectly one with Him, to be fully possessed by Him, to be to Him as the Bride to the Bridegroom. That is our eternal heavenly inheritance, and His. May the Lord give us a deeper longing for that glorious inheritance, and a true understanding of all it means.

Let us read again Psa. 106. 4, 5, and seek that these words may be true in our lives. May our hearts long increasingly after these three things: to see and enjoy the good of God's chosen, to rejoice in the gladness of His nation, and to glory with His inheritance, that He and we may joy in that inheritance together for all eternity. Amen.